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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001308

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2010

TAGS: PREL JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN'S 1559 CONFERENCE IDEA DIES

REF: A. AMMAN 1274

1B. STATE 27178

Classified By: Charge David Hale, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

11. (C) Foreign Minister al-Mulki informed Charge late on February 16 that the Syrian government had rejected the Jordanian proposal for an Arab League ministerial in Damascus on February 18. Foreign Minister Shara told him over the phone, he said, that if the aim of the meeting is to support Syria, the SARG was agreeable. Mulki said he replied that the purpose was not to support Syria; the purpose was to give Syria a face-saving way to accept UNSCR 1559 at the behest of the Arab League members. Shara rejected the idea.

12. (C) As related by Mulki, the two ministers than had an acrimonious exchange, with Mulki insisting that Syria had to implement 1559 for its own best interests, and Shara offering various retorts, from the alleged "unimplementability" of the resolution to the fact that the Lebanese government has never asked Syria to do so. At one stage, Shara asked Mulki on whose behalf he was acting; Mulki said he was speaking for Jordan and with Syrian best interests at heart to avoid a dangerous confrontation between the U.S. and Syria.

13. (C) Mulki has been coordinating with Arab League SecGen Amre Moussa. Moussa reportedly told him that Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Feisal was also cool to the idea of a conference as envisioned by Mulki; he said we needed to await the results of the investigation of Hariri's killing.

14. (C) Comment: This was characteristic Mulki: well-intentioned, supportive of the U.S., aggressive and direct, but with ideas too uncoordinated and crude for successful execution.

HALE